

The People *versus* The King.

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who left the national hero and the common people to fight for independence. He quotes with evident relish the manly lines which Wallace learned from his teacher, and which admirably express the spirit of the popular leader: " 'Tis sooth I say to thee, of all things, freedom is the best. Never, my son, consent to live a slave."

The claim of Robert Bruce, Wallace's successor in the patriotic struggle with England, to the Scottish crown, he regards as indefeasible, because it rested on the consent of the people, whilst that of John Baliol was forfeited by his subservience to the English Edward, and his recognition of a foreign power over a free kingdom. The king, he repeats, can have no authority except by the consent of the people. The kings of Scotland and England, yea, those of Judea, and all kings for that matter, had no other warrant for their crown. The people it is that appoints him, and the people may, for just cause, deprive him. He quotes examples from Roman and Teutonic history to give force to his syllogisms, and concludes a string of arguments with the assertion that both in theory and fact Robert Bruce was rightful King of Scotland. The people as represented by the magnates made him king, and that is enough for Major both as patriot and philosopher. He adds, however, a caveat that the deposition of kings should only be done by lawful authority, viz., by the ripe deliberation of the Estates of the realm, and after the king has shown by his conduct that no amendment is otherwise possible. The advantage of the State, and not of the individual, is the true test of the urgency of such an expedient. "If kings are any way corrigible, they are not to be dismissed for what fault you will, but then and only then when their deposition shall make more for the advantage of the State than their continuance."

Do not, however, let us be misled by Major's popular phraseology. He is no democrat in our modern sense. "The whole people," in its official capacity, means "the chief men of the nobility who act for the common people." When the people in reality appear on the scene, as marshalled by Wat Tyler and Jack Straw, the fiction explodes, and we are introduced to "that many-headed monster, an unbridled populace, when it rises against its head." The people of Major's phrase is thus a privileged caste, as in all the mediaeval theorists, more or